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The Difference Between Traditional and Simplified Chinese



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WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND SIMPLIFIED CHINESE?

The question implies the assertion that the terms “simplified” and “traditional” refer to “languages”. They do not. They refer to scripts.

While there are many variants of Chinese spoken in China, and also many non-Chinese languages, the main competitor to Mandarin Chinese, being the official language of mainland China and Taiwan, is Cantonese, which is spoken by about 80 million people in the Guangzhou (Canton) region of southern China, in Hongkong, and Macau.

Simplified script was introduced by the Chinese government between 1950 and 1960 and is predominantly used to write Mandarin. By contrast, Cantonese still uses predominantly traditional script.

Not all of the many thousands of characters of traditional Chinese script have an equivalent in simplified script. Only for about 30-35% of the traditional characters have simplified versions been developed, partly because not all traditional characters are so complicated that they would need simplification, partly because the introduction of simplified characters focuses on modern terms and concepts for which traditional Chinese script does not readily provide suitable characters.

In other words, simplified Chinese script is a mix of traditional and simplified Chinese characters and it is mainly used to write the Mandarin Chinese language. Traditional Chinese script is the traditional Chinese character system and it is used to write both Mandarin and Cantonese as well as other variants of the Chinese language.

If you have further questions concerning this question, please contact us at your convenience at 800.634.4880.